

Mercury Clean Up & Disposal Instructions

Mercury is a nerve toxin that affects the brain and spinal cord, and can be dangerous when its vapors are inhaled. Mercury-containing products need to be handled and disposed of properly to prevent exposure and the release of mercury into the environment.

General Things to Remember if a Spill Occurs (specific clean up instructions are below):

- Keep all pets and children away from the immediate area. If it occurs indoors, ventilate the room well for at least 24 hours after clean up is completed.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves to prevent direct contact with skin.
- **Do not use household cleaners to clean up mercury.**
- **Do not use a vacuum.** It will put mercury vapor into the air and increase exposure risks.
- **Do not use a broom to pick up mercury.** It will break the mercury into smaller droplets making it more difficult to pick up.
- **Do not wash mercury-contaminated items in the washing machine or dish washer.**
- **Do not pour mercury down the drain or into the storm drain.**
- Properly dispose of all items that may have come into contact with mercury.

Cleaning Up Broken Fluorescent Bulbs/Lamps (mercury in powder form)

- Put on disposable gloves and use pieces of cardboard to carefully push the broken glass into a pile, then pick up. Place it in a heavy plastic bag or a rigid plastic container then seal it.
- Label the container as “mercury waste”. Do not mix broken fluorescent bulbs/lamps with unbroken spent lamps when you recycle them.
- If any powder is visible on the ground, clean up with a damp paper towel.
- Place all items that may have come into contact with mercury (e.g. gloves, cardboard, paper towels) in a plastic bag or container, seal and label as “mercury waste”.

Cleaning Up Broken Thermometers, Thermostats, or Devices (mercury in liquid form)

- Use a mercury-spill kit, if one is available, and follow all instruction. The sulfur powder in the kit will help prevent mercury from vaporizing.
- If a kit is not available, put on disposable gloves, pick up any broken glass with care and place it on a paper towel. Fold the paper towel and place it in a sealable plastic bag.
- Gather the mercury beads with a piece of thin cardboard by pushing beads together with slow, sweeping motions. Use a flashlight to look for additional mercury beads in crevices.
- Use an eye dropper to collect the liquid mercury beads. Slowly and carefully squeeze the mercury into a sealable plastic bag or container and label it as “mercury waste”.
- Place all items that may have come into contact with mercury (e.g. gloves, cardboard, eye dropper, paper towels) in the bag/container with the broken glass and label as “mercury waste”.

On a Carpeted Area: Remove as much liquid mercury as possible using the methods above, then cut out the mercury-containing area. Place the carpet, eye dropper, cutting utensil and gloves in a plastic bag, seal, and label as “mercury waste”.

Proper Disposal

- **Sunnyvale Residents:** Drop off all contained mercury waste at the SMaRT Station Recycling Center, 301 Carl Rd. in Sunnyvale, from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., seven days a week. Call the Sunnyvale Recycling Program at (408) 730-7262 with any questions.
- **Businesses:** Call the Santa Clara County Hazardous Waste Recycling & Disposal Program at (408) 299-7300 to make an appointment to drop off all of your hazardous wastes or for other disposal options (larger quantity generators).